

**Department of Health and Human Services**

**OFFICE OF  
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE  
FOR  
QUALITY CHILD CARE**

**STATE ADMINISTRATORS' PERSPECTIVES**



**JUNE GIBBS BROWN  
Inspector General**

**FEBRUARY 1999  
OEI-97-07-00420**

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OEI's Region VII, Kansas City office prepared this report under the direction of James H. Wolf, Regional Inspector General. Principal OEI staff included:

#### **REGION**

Deborah Walden, *Project Leader*  
Ray Balandron, *Program Analyst*

#### **HEADQUARTERS**

Linda Hall, *Program Specialist*  
Ann O'Connor, *Program Specialist*  
Barbara Tedesco, *Technical Support Staff*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## PURPOSE

To determine the perceptions of State child care administrators regarding technical assistance provided under contracts with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Child Care Bureau.

## BACKGROUND

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 repealed a number of child care programs and created a single, integrated Child Care and Development Block Grant for low-income families. Program goals include: promoting parental choice; encouraging States to provide consumer education to parents; and helping States implement health, safety, licensing, and registration standards. The program is currently funded for a total of \$20.9 billion for Fiscal Years 1996-2002.

The ACF contracts with outside entities to provide technical assistance funded through this Grant. This technical assistance includes the coordination and support of regional and national conferences, national workgroups, leadership forums, audio conference calls, and creation of the National Child Care Information Center. In 1997, ACF further expanded its technical assistance capabilities by creating the Child Care Technical Assistance Network.

We surveyed State child care administrators regarding their sense of the technical assistance provided and the extent to which it meets their needs. We asked them about the format, content, and logistical support for the technical assistance they received.

## FINDINGS

### Format

***Large national conferences and small regional meetings are the most beneficial technical assistance formats.*** Thirty-five of the 49 administrators indicate they find large national conferences the most beneficial format because it provides them with opportunities to network with other State administrators and learn from one another. For the same reasons, 32 administrators also find small regional meetings more beneficial than some technical assistance formats. They comment that regional events also provide them opportunities to more directly address State and regional issues.

***The National Child Care Information Center is also a valuable technical assistance tool.*** Almost all State child care administrators are familiar with the National Child Care Information Center and the Child Care Bulletin published by the Center. They report information received from the Center is helpful, timely, and meets some of their technical assistance needs.

***Improvements are needed to make audio conference calls more effective.*** Administrators find audio conference calls are not always timely and often only serve to convey information they have already received in writing. They also comment they need more advance notice of upcoming audio conference calls.

## Content

***State administrators are more satisfied with the content and focus of national conferences than other technical assistance events.*** When asked to rate their satisfaction with the content and focus of technical assistance based on whether or not the issues addressed their needs and concerns, most administrators expressed satisfaction with national conferences. Significantly fewer were satisfied with the content and focus of other types of technical assistance events.

***Payment rates, Federal reporting, child care information systems, and public-private partnerships top the list of State technical assistance needs.*** Thirty-two administrators identified establishing payment rates to insure equal access to child care as an area in which they are most in need of technical assistance. It is followed by Federal reporting, child care information systems, and public-private partnerships as other areas where technical assistance is most needed.

***State administrators are unsure whether the focus of the new technical assistance network of projects will address their individual State's technical assistance needs.*** Forty-one of the 49 State administrators are aware of the new technical assistance network of projects. While they are generally satisfied the technical assistance areas selected to make up the new network will address national needs, they are less satisfied that the new technical assistance network will meet individual State needs.

## Logistical Support

***Some logistical support areas need improvement.*** State administrators are generally satisfied with hotel accommodations, meeting facilities, and travel arrangements. However, they are less satisfied with the timeliness of agendas and advance notices of upcoming events, organization of registration packages, accuracy and completeness of participant lists, and the timeliness of travel reimbursement.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Our respondents obviously valued many aspects of ACF's technical assistance program. Based on our analysis of their responses and their own suggestions, we recommend that ACF focus on the five following general approaches to enhance their program.

- - *Maintain and improve effective technical assistance formats.*
- - *Focus technical assistance on areas of interest to program administrators.*
- - *Improve logistical support.*
- - *Continue to support the National Child Care Information Center, but enhance the technical assistance provided by the website.*
- - *Reevaluate the structure and content of audio conference calls to better meet State administrators' needs.*

The report contains specific suggestions for each of these areas.

## AGENCY COMMENTS

The ACF concurs with our recommendations and describes various improvements in their technical assistance initiatives. Their comments are included in Appendix D.

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# INTRODUCTION

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## PURPOSE

To determine the perceptions of State child care administrators regarding technical assistance provided under contracts with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Child Care Bureau.

## BACKGROUND

### *Legislation*

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 repealed the Title IV-A child care programs (Aid to Families with Dependent Children/Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Child Care, Transitional Child Care, and At-Risk Care) and created a single, integrated Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) (also called the Child Care Development Fund) for low-income families. Program goals include: promoting parental choice; encouraging States to provide consumer education to parents; and helping States implement health, safety, licensing, and registration standards. The program is currently funded for a total of \$20.9 billion for Fiscal Years 1996-2002.

### *Funding*

Consolidation of all child care programs into the CCDBG dramatically increased the amount of technical assistance funds available, from \$2.6 million in FY'96 to \$6.6 million in FY'97, to over \$7 million in FY'98. With the President's new child care initiative announced in January 1998, the ACF estimates that funding available for technical assistance could increase even more.

### *Technical Assistance Contracts*

The ACF initially awarded a contract for technical assistance to J&E Associates for Fiscal Years 1993 and 1994. The technical assistance provided through this contract focused on certificate payment programs mandated by newly enacted legislation. This legislation required that States have a system capable of operating a certificate payment program in place by October 1, 1992 to allow parental choice in the selection of child care providers. Under this contract, States and tribes were surveyed regarding their certificate program capabilities and technical assistance needs. In addition, regional meetings, forums, and national child care conferences were conducted.

Upon expiration of the contract with J&E Associates, a new 3-year contract was awarded to Trans-Management Systems Corporation (T-MSC) in cooperation with Collins Management Consulting. With reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant in 1996, this

contract was extended for an additional year. Technical assistance provided under contracts with these companies included convening, supporting, and/or administering

- State, territorial, and tribal work groups,
- annual conferences, such as National State Child Care Administrators Conferences, National American Indian and Alaska Native Child Care Conferences, and national leadership forums focused on specific issues related to child care,
- regional child care conferences, and
- the National Child Care Information Center.

Contractor responsibilities also encompass a multitude of logistical support activities associated with convening and coordinating workgroups and conferences, such as securing adequate meeting facilities, hotel accommodations and presenters, compiling invitation and participant lists, designing agendas, and providing advance notice of upcoming events. They also provide travel arrangements and reimbursement for conference presenters, and in some instances (i.e., National State Child Care Administrators' Conference) for some conference attendees.

The National Child Care Information Center complements, enhances, and promotes child care linkages and serves as a mechanism for supporting quality, comprehensive services for children and families. To carry out their work, it provides question and answer services, an Internet and digital library, information resources collection and dissemination, and linkages to other websites and information sources. Questions and requests for information received by the Center come from a variety of sources via telephone (1-800-616-2242), fax, e-mail, and contacts at meetings and conferences. The Information Center activities include

- dissemination of child care information in response to requests from States, Territories and Tribes, policymakers, parents, programs, organizations, child care providers and the public,
- serving as the adjunct for the Educational Resources Information Center clearinghouse for child care via the National Child Care Information Center website, and
- publication of the *Child Care Bulletin* newsletter.

In 1997, the ACF redesigned their technical assistance approach to address emerging child care issues and technical assistance needs. Through this redesign the ACF created a Child Care Technical Assistance Network which was in the early stages of development at the time we conducted this study and not evaluated. This new Network is comprised of seven independent projects, each awarded to an individual contractor. These projects and contract awardees are the

- National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (Collins Management Consulting, Inc.),
- Child Care Technical Assistance Logistics Support Project (Trans-Management Systems Corporation),

- Healthy Child Care America Campaign (American Academy of Pediatrics),



- Tribal Child Care Technical Assistance Center (Native American Management Services, Inc.),
- Public/Private Partnerships Project (The Finance Project),
- Child Care Inclusion for Children with Disabilities United Cerebral Palsy Association), and
- Child Care Information Systems Technical Assistance Project (SRA International, Inc.).

These projects will allow continuation of the National Child Care Information Center, Healthy Child Care America Campaign, website and Child Care Bulletin. They will also play a major role in continuing to address ongoing and emerging child care issues and technical assistance needs at both the national and State levels through national and regional conferences, forums, and audio conference calls.

## **SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

This inspection focuses on the perceptions of State child care administrators regarding contracted technical assistance provided by the ACF, Child Care Bureau, with block grant funds. We mailed survey instruments to the child care administrators for each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia. We received 49 completed survey instruments. Alaska and Alabama did not participate in the study because their State child care administrator positions were vacant, and none of the remaining staff have attended or are familiar enough with the technical assistance events to respond. We also made telephone contacts as necessary to clarify responses and/or collect additional information. No consideration was given to the length of time responding administrators had held their current positions.

Through these surveys we solicited information on State child care administrators' satisfaction with the focus and format of technical assistance events, the timeliness of information provided presenters and panel members, and their opportunities to provide input.

In addition, we asked State child care administrators a number of questions regarding the focus and format of technical assistance events in which they have participated. We also asked them to identify their immediate and future technical assistance needs, and their perceptions regarding whether or not the new technical assistance network of projects will meet those needs. However, because these projects have only recently been developed and are in the early stages of implementation, we did not ask the administrators to rate their satisfaction with technical assistance provided through the new network.

This is one of three inspections to focus on various entities' perceptions of technical assistance provided by the ACF, Child Care Bureau. In two future reports, we will address the perceptions of those involved in child care at the community level and at the ACF regional office staff level.

We conducted our review in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspections* issued by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency.

# FINDINGS

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In the appendices we provide detailed tabulation of survey responses. The following is a summary of the results as they pertain to the format, focus, and logistical support for technical assistance.

## The Formats Used to Deliver Technical Assistance

**Large National Conferences and Small Regional Meetings:** *The most beneficial formats because of the networking opportunities they provide*

### *National Conferences*

Most (46) of the 49 State child care administrators have participated in National State Child Care Administrators' Conferences. When asked to identify formats they find most beneficial, 35 administrators indicate they find large national conferences one of the most beneficial technical assistance formats because it provides them with opportunities to network with other State administrators and learn from one another. In their comments, they express appreciation for the opportunities these events have provided them to network, share information, obtain advice and exchange ideas on alternative approaches and creative strategies, and to discuss and clarify issues. They are also more satisfied with the issues chosen as the focus for national conferences than with other types of technical assistance as indicated in the chart in Appendix A.

### *Regional Meetings/Conferences*

Most (44) of the 49 administrators have also participated in regional meetings or conferences. For the same reasons they find national conferences beneficial (i.e., opportunities for networking and sharing information), 32 administrators indicate they find regional meetings and conferences beneficial formats as well. However, most administrators prefer small regional meetings over large regional events. We also note that while State administrators find regional meetings and conferences beneficial, they are less satisfied with the focus of regional events than with national events. They comment that State administrators and ACF regional office staff should be allowed to determine the focus of regional events, as nationally selected issues do not always meet individual State or regional needs.

In addition to the networking opportunities, administrators find regional events more productive than some technical assistance formats. Regional events provide them with opportunities to more directly address State and regional issues. They also comment that increasing the number of regional meetings would ensure better attendance in technical assistance events because limited travel funds often restrict travel outside a State or region. Because of such budgetary restraints, administrators suggest that funds be made available for them to attend regional meetings, and that technical assistance be planned in conjunction with other events to minimize expenses.

### **Audio Conference Calls: *Improvements are needed to make them more effective***

The majority of child care administrators (46) have participated in audio conference calls conducted by the technical assistance contractor. In fact, 40 administrators have participated in 3 or more calls, 30 in 5 or more, and 16 in at least 6 audio conference calls. Likewise, 40 administrators indicate they have been given opportunities to provide input into audio conference calls, 41 to ask questions during the calls, and 37 to provide feedback after the calls.

While most administrators have participated in audio conference calls, only about half (24) indicate they find these calls to be a beneficial format for providing technical assistance. They comment that issues discussed on audio conference calls are “sometimes but not always timely” and that “some calls are just a verbal repeat of information they have already received in writing.” They believe periodic calls where administrators have an opportunity to highlight what they are doing, or in which a panel discusses initiatives from different States, are most helpful. Likewise, one administrator suggests the calls be used to provide more specific explanations and information. Another advises they be scheduled immediately following national conferences held by other organizations (i.e., American Public Human Services Association) and used to disseminate child care information released or discussed at those conferences. However, other administrators point out that audio conference calls are a very cost effective strategy and that the Child Care Bureau should “keep them coming.”

When asked if they receive timely notification of upcoming audio conference calls, 39 administrators state they usually receive notification in a timely manner, but 10 others said they did not. Their comments indicate that timely notification is received for some calls, but not others, and that notification of upcoming calls is sometimes received only a day or two in advance. They indicate they receive at most only 1-2 weeks notice of upcoming calls, and would prefer more advance notice.

### **National Forums and Roundtables: *Beneficial formats, but few administrators have participated in these events***

The Child Care Bureau also conducts national forums and roundtables through the technical assistance contracts. These events are 1 or 2 day meetings, each focused on a specific child care issue of national interest. To date, issues addressed by these forums include empowerment zones, family-centered child care, consumer education, inclusion of children with disabilities, and child care research.

While the technical assistance provided through these forums and roundtables is not directed at State Administrators, 18 administrators have attended a national forum or roundtable, 14 of which indicate they find this method of technical assistance to be beneficial. With the exception of the National State Child Care Administrators’ Conferences, these administrators rate their satisfaction levels with the focus and format of national forums/roundtables higher than other types of technical assistance. However, of the 22 administrators that expressed an opinion about their satisfaction with opportunities to provide input into these events, 9 were dissatisfied.



### **Targeted Technical Assistance: *The individually defined focus makes it a beneficial format***

The Child Care Bureau provides some targeted technical assistance to individual States and regions. These events are focused on specific areas of need and provided at the request of State administrators and ACF regional office staff. Sixteen administrators indicate they find these events to be one of the more beneficial formats for providing technical assistance because of the individually defined focus of the events.

Administrators comment that targeted technical assistance should be continued, technical assistance resources for administrators to travel to other States to exchange information and technology should be continued, and that ACF consider grouping States by characteristics, size, and technical assistance needs when providing technical assistance.

### **The National Child Care Information Center: *A valuable technical assistance resource***

#### *The Information Center*

Almost all (48 of 49) State child care administrators are familiar with the National Child Care Information Center, and 32 indicate they have contacted the Center for information. In fact, 28 administrators indicate the Center is able to provide requested information, the information is provided in a timely manner, and it is helpful.

Child care administrators indicate the majority of their requests to the Center focus on obtaining information about child care policies and practices in other States. Through these requests they solicit information about State plans, payment rates, parent fees, voucher systems, waiting lists, health and safety criteria, public/private partnerships, complaint logs, and licensing. In other more general requests, they have asked for the names of people associated with specific subject areas and/or national organizations, information regarding litigation and legal responsibilities associated with parental choice and in-home care, and information about sick child care, quality child care, child care resource and referral agencies, Federal reporting requirements, and child growth charts. Most administrators learned about the Center at one of the National State Child Care Administrators' conferences.

Our findings about the types of information being sought by State child care administrators is consistent with information provided by the National Child Care Information Center regarding the calls they receive. The Center reports that from January through April, 1998, they received 2,581 calls from a variety of sources, and averaged 675 calls per month. While only 154 of these calls were from State agency staff, the number of calls per month from State agencies is continually increasing, going from 29 calls in January 1998 to 51 in April 1998.

#### *The Website*

Most administrators are familiar with the National Child Care Information Center, and 25 administrators have accessed the Center's homepage on the World Wide Web at <http://nccic.org>. This website serves as a starting point for child care information available

on-line through the Internet, and offers links to information about State and tribal program activities and profiles, funding resources, national organizations, child care research, welfare reform, health and safety, promising practices, leadership forums, conference calendars, and other child care resources. The Center reports over 37,000 individuals visited the website in March 1998, and that each accessed an average of 6 internal pages with each visit.

Overall, comments regarding the National Child Care Information Center website are favorable. Several administrators indicate they consider all information available through the website to be helpful and 18 indicate they find information provided via the Internet to be one of the most beneficial methods of providing technical assistance. Of State administrators that have accessed the website, 14 report “occasional access” and 9 report they access the website on a “monthly” basis. Others indicate that, although they themselves have not accessed the website, members of their staff have, with a couple of States indicating they do not yet have Internet access.

Administrators indicate they were seeking information on links to other child care sites and organizations, Federal regulations and reporting requirements, allocation tables, research and statistics, data releases, quality child care, sick child care, welfare reform, and market rates when they contacted the website. When asked for suggestions to improve the website, administrators would like access to more State comparison data and information about upcoming events made available through the website, and that linkages to State agency websites would also be helpful.

#### *The Child Care Bulletin*

Forty-six of the 49 State child care administrators are familiar with the ***Child Care Bulletin***, a newsletter published by the National Child Care Information Center on a bi-monthly basis. Through the Center, the ACF uses this bulletin as a tool to disseminate information resources to approximately 3,000 subscribers. It includes information on Federal requirements and program changes, innovative approaches to quality child care, and examples of model programs.

Most administrators (43) find the issues addressed in the bulletin to be timely, and of interest to them in meeting their needs (42). While a few administrators indicate they consider some of the information provided in the bulletin to be “after the fact” or “dated,” most administrators’ responses are positive, including such comments as

“I have been impressed by the professionalism of this document.”

“I often distribute to 100-150 persons.”

“I mail copies to each of the 92 counties and grantees in my State.”

“Please continue to include ways to access research, studies, etc.”

## The Content and Focus of Technical Assistance

*State administrators are more satisfied with the content and focus of national conferences than other technical assistance events*

We asked State child care administrators to rate their overall satisfaction with the content and focus of technical assistance events based on whether or not the issues meet their needs and concerns, and if they receive information when they need it. In response, 41 of the 49 (91 percent) administrators are satisfied with the content and focus of national conferences. However, fewer administrators (73 to 77 percent respectively) are satisfied with the content and focus of audio conference calls and regional meetings, as indicated in the chart in Appendix A.

State administrators indicate that assistance focused on 1) sharing information and administrative concerns with other States, 2) Federal reporting, and 3) welfare reform has been most beneficial in meeting their needs. Those and other technical assistance topics administrators find most (and least) beneficial are outlined below, in the order in which they were selected.

### Most Beneficial Technical Assistance Topics

**Number of State Administrators  
Who Selected Topics As:**

<u>Topics</u>	<u>Most Beneficial</u>	<u>Least Beneficial</u>
Sharing Information & Concerns	34	1
Federal Reporting	32	5
Welfare Reform	26	1
School-Age Child Care	19	4
Head Start Collaboration	17	7
Infant/Toddler Care	10	1
Collaboration with other agencies	10	5
Inclusion of Children with Disabilities	8	2
Health and Safety	7	4

As previously noted, Appendix A contains a complete overview of the administrators' satisfaction ratings regarding the focus and other aspects of technical assistance.

*Payment rates, Federal reporting, child care information systems, and public-private partnerships top the list of State technical assistance needs*

We presented the administrators with a list of technical assistance issue areas and asked them to identify those where they feel an immediate need for technical assistance. From that list, 32 administrators identified establishing payment rates to insure equal access to child care as an area in which they are most in need of immediate technical assistance. It is followed by Federal reporting (27), child care information systems (26), and public/private partnerships (24) as other areas of technical assistance need.



We also asked administrators what issues or subject areas they foresee as their future technical assistance needs, and when they anticipate needing the assistance. Federal reporting and data collection requirements topped the list of their future technical assistance needs, followed by welfare reform and ensuring equal access to quality child care through payment rates and parent co-payments. A summary of both the immediate and future technical assistance needs identified by State child care administrators is outlined in Appendix B.

***State administrators are aware of the new technical assistance network of projects but some are unsure whether it will address their individual State's technical assistance needs***

To address emerging issues and child care needs, the ACF redesigned their approach to technical assistance in 1997, creating the Child Care Technical Assistance Network. As noted in the background of this report, this new network is comprised of seven independent projects, and was in the early stages of development at the time we conducted this study.

Most (41) of the administrators are aware of the new “technical assistance network” of projects. They learned about the network through their contacts with regional and central office ACF staff, and through their participation in various technical assistance events and mailings. While 34 (83 percent) of the administrators indicate they are satisfied the areas selected to make up the new network will address national technical assistance needs, only 29 administrators (69 percent) are satisfied these same areas will address their specific State needs. In their comments they expressed concern with the number of individual projects and coordination of technical assistance provided through the network.

However, three of the new network projects focus on issue areas identified by a large number of State administrators as areas where they need immediate and/or future technical assistance. As stated earlier in this report, 26 administrators identified child care information systems, 24 identified public-private partnerships, and 16 identified inclusion of children with disabilities as areas where they need immediate technical assistance. In addition, the network retains the logistical support project, the National Child Care Information Center and the Healthy Child Care America Campaign and establishes a separate project to address tribal needs.

## **Logistical Support**

***Some logistical support areas need improvement***

State child care administrators are generally satisfied with hotel accommodations, meeting facilities, and travel arrangements. However, they are less satisfied with the timeliness of agendas and advance notices of upcoming events, organization of registration packages, accuracy and completeness of participant lists, and the timeliness of travel reimbursement for travel expenditures covered by the technical assistance contract. Most of their comments focused on

the need for more advance notice of upcoming events, more timely reimbursement for travel expenditures and better contractor telephone coverage during business hours.

A chart outlining how the State child care administrators rated their satisfaction with logistical support is located in Appendix C.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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Our respondents obviously valued many aspects of ACF's technical assistance program. Based on our analysis of their responses and their own suggestions, we recommend the ACF focus on the five following general approaches to enhance their program.

## *Maintain and improve effective technical assistance formats*

The ACF should provide technical assistance in settings which administrators have identified as most conducive to sharing information and learning from one another. To do that, we recommend it

- continue to hold the National State Child Care Administrators' Conference on an annual basis.
- plan more small regional events based on state and regional needs.
- provide more direct assistance to States through technology transfer and information exchange.
- group States by characteristics, size, and needs.

## *Focus technical assistance on areas of interest to program administrators*

To meet the needs identified by State administrators, we recommend that ACF address the following issues in future technical assistance events:

- Payment rates to ensure equal access to quality child care;
- Federal reporting and data collection;
- Welfare reform;
- Public-private partnerships; and
- Child care information systems.

## *Improve logistical support*

To improve logistical support activities the ACF should ensure the contractor providing logistical support:

- furnishes adequate advance notice of upcoming events;
- shares event invitation and participation lists with State child care administrators for completeness and accuracy;
- makes reimbursement for travel to events in a timely manner; and
- provides adequate phone coverage during business hours.

***Continue to support the National Child Care Information Center, but enhance technical assistance provided by it***

We recommend the ACF continue to fund the National Child Care Information Center and publish the *Child Care Bulletin*, and that they enhance the website by providing:

- administrators with more information about the website and how to use it; and
- more information 1) which compares State child care practices and policies, 2) about upcoming national and regional meetings, and 3) to link users with State child care agency websites.

***Reevaluate the structure and content of audio conference calls to better meet State administrators' needs***

To better meet the needs of State administrators, we recommend ACF:

- broaden the scope of audio conference calls to allow more State child care administrators to highlight effective practices;
- use audio conference calls to summarize and discuss information provided through other national organizations' conferences (National Child Care Resources and Referral Association, American Public Human Services Association, etc.); and
- ensure State administrators receive timely notification of upcoming audio conference calls and/or establish a set schedule for calls.

**AGENCY COMMENTS**

The ACF concurs with our recommendations and describes various improvements in their technical assistance initiatives. Their comments are included in Appendix D.

# APPENDIX A

## Format and Content

### How State Child Care Administrators Rate Their Satisfaction with Technical Assistance

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Total
	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents	Number of Respondents
<b><u>National Conferences</u></b>					
- Focus/Content	41	91	4	9	45
- Presenters	39	93	3	7	42
- Opportunities for Input	23	74	14	26	31
<b><u>Regional Meetings/Conferences</u></b>					
<b>General Meetings:</b>					
- Focus/Content	23	77	7	23	30
- Presenters	25	74	9	26	34
- Opportunities for Input	26	74	9	26	35
<b>School-Age Child Care</b>					
- Focus/Content	24	77	7	23	31
- Presenters	25	83	4	17	30
<b>Inclusion of Children w/Disabilities</b>					
- Focus/Content	12	75	4	25	33
- Presenters	12	63	7	37	19
<b><u>Audio Conference Calls</u></b>					
- Focus/Content	33	73	12	27	45
- Presenters/Panel Members	36	80	9	20	45
- Opportunities for Input	24	75	8	25	32
<b><u>Targeted Technical Assistance</u></b>					
- Presenters	10	77	3	23	13
<b><u>Overall Satisfaction w/Focus of Technical Assistance</u></b>					
- Information Meets Needs and Concerns	37	77	11	23	48
- Information is Received When Needed	43	90	15	31	48
<b><u>Anticipated Satisfaction with the New Technical Assistance Network of Projects</u></b>					
- Meets Overall Needs	34	83	7	17	41
- Meets Specific State Needs	29	69	13	31	42

## APPENDIX B

### Technical Assistance Needs Identified by State Child Care Administrators

Number of State Administrators		Technical Assistance Focus/Subject Areas
Immediate Needs	Future Needs	
32	4	Payment Rates to ensure Equal Access to Quality Care
27	7	Federal Reporting and Data Collection Requirements
26	3	Child Care Information Systems
24	4	Public/Private Partnerships
21	1	Using Technology to Conduct Business Electronic Transfer of Benefits or Funds (16) Internet (9) Intranet (4)
20	2	Infant/Toddler Care
18	0	Head Start Child Care Collaboration
17	5	Welfare Reform and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
16	3	Children with Disabilities
16	4	Provider Training Programs
14	4	Provider Accreditation Programs
13	0	Subsidized Child Care
12	0	Health and Safety
12	0	Federal Regulations, Policies, and Procedures
12	0	Child Care Resource and Referral Programs
11	1	School-Age Child Care
7	0	State/Tribal Coordination
	1	*Consumer Education
	1	*Licensing

\* These subject areas were not included in the selection list presented regarding immediate TA needs, but were identified by administrators as areas where they will need future assistance.

## APPENDIX C

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### LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

#### How State Child Care Administrators Rate Their Satisfaction

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Total Number of Respondents
	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents	
<b>Advance notice of upcoming events</b>	33	75	11	25	44
<b>Agendas and event instructions</b>	31	66	16	34	47
<b>Registration packages</b>	36	77	11	23	47
<b>Participant lists</b>	37	80	9	20	46
<b>Hotel accommodations</b>	43	91	4	9	47
<b>Meeting facilities</b>	42	88	6	12	48
<b>Travel arrangements</b>	42	89	5	11	47
<b>Travel reimbursement</b>	31	74	11	26	42



## **7 A P P E N D I X D**

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### **AGENCY COMMENTS**



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
Office of the Assistant Secretary, Suite 600  
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20447

February 3, 1999

TO: June Gibbs Brown  
Inspector General

FROM: Olivia A. Golden *Olivia A. Golden*  
Assistant Secretary  
for Children and Families

SUBJECT: Comments on the Office of Inspector General's Draft Report  
"Technical Assistance for Quality Child Care" State Administrators' Perspectives  
OEI-07-97-00420

Attached are the Administration for Children and Families comments on the above captioned report. The report presents an analysis of responses to questions about the Child Care Bureau's technical assistance. A summary of the survey of state child care administrators conducted by the Office of Inspector General, as well as recommendations for improving the Child Care Bureau's technical assistance, are contained in the report. We have responded to each of the five recommendations.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft report. If you have questions or need further information, please contact Frank Fuentes, Deputy Associate Commissioner of the Child Care Bureau, at 401-7256.

Attachment

### General Comments

The Administration for Children and Families is pleased to have the opportunity to provide official comments on the "State Child Care Administrators' Perspectives" of the Office of Inspector General's draft report entitled "Technical Assistance for Quality Child Care" (OEI-07-97-00420).

The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 had an enormous impact on the growing need to provide quality child care for the nation's children and families. In recognition of the need, the Child Care Bureau established a Child Care Technical Assistance Network (CCTAN) comprised of seven separate projects. With the intent to meet the technical assistance needs of the state administrators to implement the Child Care and Development Fund, a survey of the administrators' perspectives on the technical assistance provided by the Child Care Bureau prior to PRWORA, was conducted by the Office of Inspector General (OIG).

These projects and contract awardees are the following:

- National Child Care Information Center (Collins Management Consulting, Inc.);
- Child Care Bureau Logistical Support Project (Trans-Management Systems Corporation);
- Healthy Child Care America Campaign (American Academy of Pediatrics);
- Tribal Child Care Technical Assistance Center (Native American Management Services, Inc.);
- Child Care Public/Private Partnerships Project (The Finance Project);
- Map to Inclusive Child Care (University of Connecticut); and
- Child Care Information Systems Technical Assistance Project (SRA International, Inc.).

The findings of the Office of Inspector General's Study of the technical assistance offered by the Child Care Bureau through 1997, are somewhat consistent with the Bureau's own assessment of the technical assistance that was available for the State Administrators prior to 1997. The Child Care Bureau believes the CCTAN which began developing in October 1997, was the starting point for the implementation of the recommendations that the Inspector General identifies in the report. The network provides States, Territories and Tribes with technical assistance that focuses on specific areas of need identified by the State and Tribal administrators, Regional offices and the Child Care Bureau. The Child Care Technical Assistance Network contracts were newly awarded at the time that the survey was conducted. Although several of the contractors had previously provided technical assistance for the Child Care Bureau, all of the contracts awarded as part of CCTAN have new and different tasks.

The specific OIG recommendations are stated below and followed by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) responses.

**OIG Recommendation:**

The ACF should provide technical assistance in settings which administrators have identified as most conducive to sharing information and learning from one another. To do that, we recommend it:

- Continue to hold the National State Child Care Administrators' Conference on an annual basis.
- Plan more small regional events based on State and Regional needs.
- Provide more direct assistance to States through technology transfer and information exchange.
- Group States by characteristics, size and needs.

**ACF Response:**

The ACF concurs with the recommendation to maintain and improve technical assistance formats. The Child Care Bureau is planning to continue to hold the National State Child Care Administrators' Conference on an annual basis and is presently planning for the 1999 conference to be held August, 8-11, 1999, in Washington, D.C.

Additionally, the Child Care Bureau, through the Child Care Bureau Logistical Support Project (CCBLSP) and in concert with the regional office child care staff, are planning small regional events in every ACF Region. Each Region conducts one or two regional conferences per year and solicits input from the State Administrators on the program agenda for the meetings based on state and regional needs. Each region may now also convene quarterly regional coordinating council meetings to include state and other child care administrators and members of the child care technical assistance network. Regions have the flexibility to select program topics of interest to their states that are in keeping with the ACF priorities.

In order to provide more direct assistance to States through technology transfer and information exchange, the August 1999 State Child Care Administrators' Conference is featuring the Child Care Bureau's Child Care Automation Resource Center (CCARC). The CCARC is a part of one of the newer technical assistance projects of the Child Care Bureau. The CCARC is administered through the Child Care Information Systems contract and will be sponsoring many hands-on sessions and workshops for the State Administrators and their systems technology partners.

The Child Care Bureau acknowledges the possible advantages of conducting sessions at the national conference, as well as at regional meetings that would provide opportunities for States to be grouped by characteristics, size and needs. The Child Care Bureau will continue to address the recommendation at planning meetings for the national and regional conferences. In the past, individuals have self-grouped or been divided into

regional groups. Although administrators may recommend different groupings when asked to identify formats most beneficial, thirty-five of the forty-six administrators who have attended indicate they find large national conferences one of the most beneficial technical assistance formats. Administrators further state that the National State Administrators' Conference provides them with opportunities to network with other State Administrators and learn from one another.

**OIG Recommendation:**

To meet the needs identified by State Administrators, we recommend that ACF address the following issues in the future technical assistance events:

- Payment rates to ensure equal access to quality child care;
- Federal reporting and data collection;
- Welfare reform;
- Public-private partnerships; and
- Child Care Information Systems.

**ACF Response:**

The ACF appreciates the identification of certain topics of interest to the State Administrators. As in prior years, planning of the 1999 National State Administrators' Conference has included the Child Care Bureau's technical assistance staff solicitation of input from several sources. In November 1998, a meeting with State Administrators was held to discuss plans for the August 1999 conference. Additionally, conference calls with the State Issues Work Group members and the Regional Offices were also held to discuss the content and format of the conference. Among other topics included in the proposed agenda are the recommendations from the OIG survey, specifically: child care information systems; payment rates to ensure equal access to quality child care; Federal reporting and data collection; welfare reform; public-private partnerships; school-age care; inclusion of children with disabilities; Head Start and other early care collaborations; infant and toddler care and health and safety information.

The Child Care Bureau has conducted the following activities to provide technical assistance to States and Territories concerning reporting requirements and information systems:

- Conducted a national training effort for States and Territories on the collection of child care data for Federal reporting purposes;
- Created the first website for child care automation technical assistance;
- Developed a software utility to assist States and Territories with Federal reporting requirements;
- Published 9 Technical Assistance Bulletins and developed 31 animated Powerpoint presentations; and
- Developed a Child Care Electronic Environment: System Automation Worktool to assist States in the development of model subsidy information management systems.

The OIG survey also indicates that Public-private Partnerships is an interest of the State Administrators for future technical assistance. The Child Care Partnership Projects, one of the seven projects composing the CCTAN, is focused on providing technical assistance to promote and improve public-private partnerships. The project is providing technical assistance through written materials, web site, and a national conference.

**OIG Recommendation:**

To improve logistical support activities, the ACF should ensure the contractor providing logistical support:

- Furnishes adequate advance notice of upcoming events;
- Shares event invitation and participation lists with State Child Care Administrators for completeness and accuracy;
- Makes reimbursement for travel to events in a timely manner; and
- Provides adequate phone coverage during business hours.

**ACF Response:**

The ACF concurs that some improvements were needed in providing logistical support to the many national and regional child care events. In September 1997, the Child Care Bureau awarded a contract to Trans-Management Systems Corporation (T-MSC) to focus primarily on logistical support for the national and regional events. T-MSC established the Child Care Bureau Logistical Support Project (CCBLSP) and hired additional staff both for child care conference planning and for logistical arrangements. In order that they might furnish adequate advance notice of upcoming events, the CCBLSP has been sending "Save the Date" postcards well in advance of the event. The regional office staff generally decides the list of invitees in concert with the State Administrators. The CCBLSP will continue to work with the regions to ensure that event invitation and participation lists are complete and accurate. Improvements have been made in the reimbursement procedures at T-MSC so that timely reimbursements for travel to national and regional events is occurring. Additional clerical and administrative support has been added to the CCBLSP so that there is appropriate phone coverage during business hours. The Child Care Bureau has received a significant amount of positive feedback from the child care community regarding improvements in the logistical support provided by CCBLSP.

OIG Recommendation:

We recommend that ACF continue to fund the National Child Care Information Center and publish the Child Care Bulletin, and that they enhance the web site by providing:

- Administrators with more information about the web site and how to use it; and
- More information 1) which compares State child care practices and policies, 2) about upcoming national and regional meetings, and 3) to link users with State child care agency web sites.

ACF Response:

The ACF concurs with the OIG recommendation to fund the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC). In February 1998, the Child Care Bureau awarded a new contract to implement and expand the NCCIC. By the end of the first year of this contract, the Child Care Bureau estimates over 450,000 people will have accessed the NCCIC Home Page for information about the Child Care Bureau, State demographics, publications and other child care resources. Each of these visitors accesses, on average, six internal pages of the NCCIC web site.

The NCCIC web site is in the process of being revised to be more user-friendly. The Web site will be organized by topic and by interest areas. Presently, the NCCIC web site provides links to many other child care web sites. At the August 1999 State Administrators' Conference, there will be opportunities for the administrators to learn how to access the NCCIC web site. A calendar of national and regional events can be accessed through the web.

The NCCIC has expanded the NCCIC Library database and includes over 10,000 materials in a variety of media. These materials include State and tribal specific holdings, general materials relating to all aspects of child care and videos, newsletters and journals of use to the child care field.

Work is also in progress to create additional databases in the NCCIC Information Management System. Preparations have begun to place an ACCESS database on the NCCIC web site with demographic and statistical information from the NCCIC State Profiles and other sources.

Since February 1998, over 99,000 documents have been distributed to the child care field, including pamphlets, brochures, fact sheets, flyers, newsletters, publications, monographs, and videos. Many materials that NCCIC has developed, including information responses, are now available in Spanish.

The NCCIC sends out the bimonthly mailing to State grantees, CCTAN partners, and regional office staff. Materials made available in this way include such items as the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) regulations, and publications of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Family and Youth Services Bureau at the

Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, and other useful resources.

In February 1998, the NCCIC launched a network of State Technical Assistance Specialists. State TA Specialists provide targeted, responsive, timely support to State grantees implementing the CCDF.

#### OIG Recommendation:

To better meet the needs of the State administrators, we recommend that ACF:

- Broaden the scope of audio conference calls to allow more State child care administrators to highlight effective practices;
- Use audio conference calls to summarize and discuss information provided through other national organizations' conferences (National Child Care Resources and Referral Association, American Public Human Services Association, etc); and
- Ensure State administrators receive timely notification of upcoming audio conference calls and/or establish a set schedule for calls.

#### ACF Response:

In the past, the Child Care Bureau has utilized the monthly audio conference calls to disseminate information and to solicit State input on specific topics. Topics discussed on such calls included the development of the CCDF; welfare reform; infant and toddler initiative; school-age care; performance measures; financial issues; and data requirements. The Child Care Bureau Logistical Support Project (CCBLSP) sends a FAX to State Administrators to announce the call and the agenda topic. Additionally, CCBLSP requests a FAX back with comments, questions and issues regarding the topic of the call. Feedback in the form of follow-up evaluation of the call is also sent by FAX to the participants of the call. To date, the feedback has not reflected what the OIG survey reports. The Child Care Bureau will address the suggestion of broadening the scope of audio conference calls to allow more State Child Care Administrators to highlight effective practices; and to summarize and discuss information provided through other national organizations' conferences; and develop a set schedule for the calls to ensure State Administrators receive timely notification of audio conference calls.

#### Technical Comments:

Page 9, paragraph 4, last sentence. The draft report states that the network added the Healthy Child Care Campaign to more directly address health and safety issues. This is not correct. The Healthy Child Care America Campaign has been in existence since 1995. The American Academy of Pediatrics, under an agreement with the Child Care Bureau and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau coordinates the technical activities of the campaign and has been a part of the CCTAN since 1997.



